



## ***MORINGA OLEIFERA - THE MIRACLE TREE***

**By Karen Cottingham**

**Herb Society of America / South Texas Unit**

A plant called Miracle Tree and Tree of Life being promoted as a solution to worldwide malnutrition must be something really special. And as a bonus, *Moringa oleifera* is an easy-to-grow tree that will thrive in Houston USDA Zone 9 backyards.

You may have seen moringa leaves or pods in local Farmer's Markets or pricy moringa powder or tea in health food stores. As one of the most nutrient-dense plants on the planet, moringa was named a "Top Wellness Trend of 2018." Its tasty leaves are unusually rich in protein, iron, calcium, all nine essential amino acids, vitamins and phytonutrients. Its foot-long seedpods are high in protein and omega-3 fatty acids.

### Moringa Overview:

- \* Name derived from Tamil word "murungai" meaning twisted pod and Latin for "oil-bearing"
- \* Native to Himalayan foothills of India
- \* Cultivated year-round in tropical and sub-tropical climates; annually in temperate areas
- \* Propagates easily from seeds or cuttings
- \* Grows rapidly
- \* Drought-resistant

NATURE'S WAY  
RESOURCES  
*an organically based service company*

[www.natureswayresources.com](http://www.natureswayresources.com)

- \* Dies back with freezing, but re-grows reliably from roots
- \* Beautiful, fragrant flowers are attractive to bees



Moringa may well be the world's most useful tree, but it does take some effort to keep its appearance tidy. If not pruned regularly, rapid growth can quickly result in a tall, straggly tree with unreachable leaves and fruit.

When the plant reaches two feet, trim the terminal growing tip to stimulate growth of secondary branch growth on main stem. Trim secondary branches back by half at about eight inches. Repeat on tertiary branches which soon appear.

Maintaining 6-12 foot height makes it easy to harvest leaves and pods. Regular harvesting also help keep growth manageable and encourages branching. And the more you prune (or harvest), the more the plant will produce!

If you appreciate plants that are "tenacious, resilient, versatile, generous and flat-out eccentric" (words of moringa researcher Mark Olson), *Moringa oleifera* is for you. Even the lovely flower buds are edible.

With regular pruning, you can also enjoy a unique "Dr. Seussian" plant in your landscape. I love writer Amanda Little's description of moringa's "smooth, skinny trunk and affably chaotic branches, which protrude like hands waving hello" - a cheerful and welcoming sight as one enters the garden!

If you would like to see two graceful young moringa trees, visit the McGovern Centennial Gardens in Hermann Park.

---

101 Sherbrook Circle • Conroe, Texas 77385-7750  
(936) 321-6990 Metro • (936) 273-1200 Conroe • Fax (936) 273-1655